

C E N T R A L I N T E L L I G E N C E A G E N C Y
O F F I C E O F N A T I O N A L E S T I M A T E S

11 October 1962

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

S U B J E C T: Reconnaissance Over Cuba - Overt or Covert?

N O T E: The following are conclusions reached
by a panel of four officers of ODE

Advantages of Covert over Overt

1. Avoidance of certain adverse repercussions arising from the Presidential announcement:
 - a. The unfavorable propaganda barrage -- it would not be possible to win in propaganda terms on what would be universally regarded as an illegal and aggressive act.
 - b. Possible UN action of condemnation which could result in a painful desertion of the US by its allies.
 - c. A possible Soviet reaction that the USSR must increase its overt commitment to Castro's defense.
2. In the event of loss of an aircraft under conditions other than the "worst case" the possibility of plausible denial would remain open.

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Advantages of Overt over Covert

3. In the event an aircraft is shot down even in the circumstances of the "worst case" the tensions might be more manageable. The Soviets, and world opinion, would not fear that the US, having previously announced an overflight policy, would then take a shootdown as a pretext for invasion.

4. The Presidential announcement would convey to the world an increased sense of the gravity with which the US views developments in Cuba. If the Soviets have been considering the installation of MRBM's* they might be at least temporarily deterred from this action. Some other states might bring pressure on the USSR -- as well as the US -- to exercise restraint in the situation.

SHERMAN KNIGHT
Chairman
Board of National Estimates

* You are well aware that we feel this to be an unlikely move in the near future. We are in the process of preparing you a memorandum setting forth our views at length.

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